

American

NEWS & VIEWS

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President Obama Says European Debt Crisis Could Have “Real Effect” on U.S.

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer |

Washington — President Obama says the European sovereign debt crisis could hurt the U.S. economy, and he urged European leaders to “act fast” in support of Greece and other countries in the European Monetary Union that are having difficulty paying their debts.

Speaking to reporters at the White House October 6, Obama said financial uncertainty in Europe is the “biggest headwind the American economy is facing right now” due to its affect on global markets. But he also expressed confidence that leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Nicolas Sarkozy are mindful of the challenge and the need to coordinate a response.

“The problems Europe is having today could have a very real effect on our economy at a time when it’s already fragile,” Obama said. He urged American lawmakers to pass his proposed American Jobs Act to boost U.S. economic growth, create jobs and “help guard against another downturn if the situation in Europe gets any worse.”

The president said that because the world is increasingly interconnected, the sovereign debt crisis is already having an effect on the U.S. economy. He also said that because American families and businesses and the U.S. government are coping with their own fiscal challenges, the United States cannot raise its level of imports and incur more debt as it has done in the past to help other economies when they were in trouble.

Over the last 20 years, the United States has been “the engine for world economic growth,” Obama said, serving as the purchaser and importer of last resort.

“We would stimulate our economies and our American consumers would buy stuff around the world. And so if they got into trouble, they could always say, ‘Well, we’re going to sell to the U.S.’” he said.

But given current U.S. economic challenges, “Europe is not going to be able to export its way out of this problem,” Obama said. “They’re going to have to fix that problem.” He urged European leaders to come up with “a very clear, concrete plan of action” by the Group of 20 leading economies’ meeting November 3–4 in Cannes, France.

The president said he speaks frequently with Merkel and Sarkozy and that both “want to act to prevent a sovereign debt crisis from spinning out of control, or seeing the

potential breakup of the euro.” But he acknowledged that they face the difficult task of finding an agreement that would be approved by all European parliaments.

“What I’ve been seeing over the last month is a recognition by European leaders of the urgency of the situation. And nobody’s, obviously, going to be affected more than they will be if the situation there spins out of control. So I’m confident that they want to get this done,” he said.

Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner said October 5 that European countries have the financial resources to manage the debt crisis, and that it has just been “a question of moving more quickly and more forcefully” to address it.

“I expect you’re going to see them do that because I think the consequences of the alternative are too expensive for them to contemplate,” he said in remarks at the Newseum in Washington.

“Europe matters a lot to us. We don’t want to see Europe weakened by a protracted crisis. They understand that. They’ve invited us in, through the [International Monetary Fund] and directly through the substantial swap lines we have in place for dollar funding for European institutions,” he said.

European representatives largely have welcomed the U.S. support and advice, which Geithner said at times has been “very forceful and aggressive.” These European officials, he said, have been reminding the world that the United States has its own economic challenges to address.

“No one feels that more strongly than we do,” Geithner said, acknowledging that the American role in the global financial crisis has “caused enormous damage to our credibility in the world,” as well as the need for U.S. economic policy officials to participate in discussions with their global counterparts “from a position of extraordinary humility in the face of our challenges.”

President Obama Mourns Steve Jobs, One of America’s Greatest Innovators

By Merle David Kellerhals Jr. | Staff Writer

Washington — Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, who conceived of ways to make communication among ordinary people extraordinary, is being remembered as one of America’s greatest innovators.

President Obama and first lady Michelle Obama expressed their sadness on learning of Jobs’ passing, saying that the California native was “brave enough to think differently, bold enough to believe he could change the world, and talented enough to do it.”

Jobs, 56, died of complications from pancreatic cancer on October 5 at his home in Cupertino, California.

If the technology is interactive, then it is nearly synonymous with the vision of Steve Jobs. In 1976, Jobs and school friend Stephen Wozniak created Apple Computer, which later became known simply as Apple. The hallmark of Apple technology has been that any device – computer, phone, music player or tablet – must be easy to use.

A college dropout, Jobs began his series of accomplishments by commercializing and popularizing the graphical user interface that has made computing easy for any user regardless of experience or knowledge.

Jobs and Wozniak made the multicolored Apple logo a worldwide icon of innovation and ease-of-use technology.

Jobs went on to introduce the iPod portable music player, with its familiar ear buds; the iPhone touch-screen telephone, populated with one of the industry's newest innovations – the app; and the iPad tablet computer. The rest of the computer industry has worked to follow his lead.

“By building one of the planet’s most successful companies from his garage, he exemplified the spirit of American ingenuity,” the president said in a prepared statement. “By making computers personal and putting the Internet in our pockets, he made the information revolution not only accessible, but intuitive and fun. And by turning his talents to storytelling, he has brought joy to millions of children and grownups alike.”

Obama said that Jobs was fond of saying that he lived every day like it was his last.

“Because he did, he transformed our lives, redefined entire industries, and achieved one of the rarest feats in human history: He changed the way each of us sees the world,” the president said.

In testimony to Jobs’ achievements in technology, many Americans first learned of his passing on a device he developed, Obama said. “The world has lost a visionary.”

Fans of Apple the world over have been expressing their grief and admiration for a man with an extraordinary vision for what is possible. Many fans in Japan stood outside the Apple store in Tokyo and held up their iPads with a single burning candle on the screen in remembrance of the man who brought tablet technology to the world.

Secretary Clinton Works to Enhance Western Hemisphere Economic Ties

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington – Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton expressed support for growth and prosperity in Latin America during meetings in the Dominican Republic with regional leaders that are meant to strengthen economic ties and to ensure the benefits of free trade are felt throughout the Western Hemisphere.

“We have to create the conditions that will allow millions of our fellow citizens to break free from poverty, to participate more fully in our economies and to build better lives for their children,” Clinton said October 5 in Santo Domingo. She added that having the Pathways to Prosperity ministerial meeting alongside the Americas Competitiveness Forum demonstrates a clear regional commitment to creating jobs, expanding opportunity and encouraging an environment in which widespread growth can take place.

In remarks at the opening of the Americas Competitiveness Forum, Clinton said the group is highlighting the “absolutely essential” role of education for all citizens during this year’s meeting.

“Unless we improve the education and training of our workforces, we will not grow to the full extent of our potential,” she said.

The fifth annual forum brought together public and private sector leaders to discuss the next steps to improve competitiveness and economic prosperity in the Americas.

While in Santo Domingo, Clinton also addressed the Pathways to Prosperity ministerial meeting. The group was launched in 2005 and includes 15 countries from across the Americas committed to promoting inclusive growth, prosperity and social justice.

The secretary called the meeting a success, and said the group continues to stress efforts “to help people escape poverty, achieve prosperity and build better lives for themselves and their families” by sharing best practices, embracing good policies and working to close the region’s equality gap.

She said that while the hemisphere has seen strong economic growth, “it hasn’t done enough to lift the many millions of people who are still living in poverty into a better life.”

The group adopted a declaration and a plan of action that detail concrete steps to level the economic playing field through empowering small businesses, facilitating trade,

building a modern workforce and promoting sustainable business practices and environmental cooperation.

Clinton said the United States will commit up to \$17.5 million to fund projects that foster inclusive economic growth in the Americas, on top of another \$5 million during the past year to support other Pathways projects.

One of the group's key initiatives is to foster entrepreneurship and to empower women in business.

"Where women are involved in economies, everybody does better," Clinton said in remarks to women entrepreneurs October 5. "That's just common sense."

The secretary said regional leaders also addressed joint efforts to enhance security, fight corruption and protect human rights across the hemisphere.

Clinton was joined at the meetings by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Wendy Sherman, Assistant Secretary of State for Economic, Energy and Business Affairs Jose Fernandez, Acting Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs Roberta Jacobson and U.S. Permanent Representative to the Organization of American States Carmen Lomellin.

Iranian Americans: Critical Link Between Washington and Tehran

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer

Washington — Iranian Americans can help improve communication between the peoples of their current and ancestral homelands. A U.S. lawmaker has urged them to step up their outreach to elected officials and their fellow Americans to help increase American understanding of Iran's society and politics.

Speaking October 3 at the National Iranian American Council (NIAC) conference in Washington, Congressman Jim Moran of Virginia said that for most Americans, Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei are "the face of Iran," but as many Iranian Americans can attest, "that's not what Iran is."

"We need to understand that there are a whole lot of other people in Iran that we need to be dealing with, and have a much more sophisticated and expansive relationship [with], and that's the kind of relationship we can really only generate with Iranian Americans," Moran said.

NIAC, a Washington-based nonprofit organization that works to advance the interests of Iranian Americans, invited community members from across the country to attend a three-day leadership conference where they could see and learn how U.S. government decisions are

made.

Moran cited a poll by Zogby International that showed six in 10 Iranian Americans have immediate family members in Iran, while seven in 10 talk to their friends and family in the country several times a month.

Given the more than 30-year break in diplomatic relations between the two countries, most Americans, including their elected officials, "know less about Iran than we do any other large country in the world," he said.

Moran cited the September 20 remarks by former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Michael Mullen in which Mullen warned that because there are no real channels of communication between Tehran and Washington, "we don't understand each other."

Even in "the darkest days of Cold War," U.S. officials had links to their counterparts in the former Soviet Union, Mullen said. But in the case of Iran, "if something happens ... it's virtually assured that we won't get it right, that there will be miscalculations which would be extremely dangerous in that part of the world."

Moran told NIAC members, "We need to hear from you." Iranian Americans "should be the source of our most accurate information on what is going on in Iran."

For example, he said, the U.S.-based community was able to follow the events leading up to the June 2009 presidential election, which Ahmadinejad claimed to have won. Thanks to Iranian-American contacts with their friends and families, "we are able to know beyond dispute that those elections were neither free nor fair," Moran said.

The June 2009 election and the subsequent wave of protests that swept the country have helped to refocus the community's priorities, he said.

In a 2008 poll, 54 percent of Iranian Americans said U.S. domestic issues such as the economy and jobs, as well as concerns over discrimination, were deemed a priority, while the U.S.-Iran relationship and internal Iranian issues were cited as being most important to only around one-third of those polled.

"Only a year later, after the Iranian elections, those numbers have flipped. Now a majority cite foreign policy issues ... as most important," Moran said, adding that the increased interest "is good for our policy community."

Moreover, he said Iranian Americans are participating in the U.S. political system "at a level that is not seen in most other ethnic and national groups." He cited a recent survey from Zogby that said four out of five community

members are registered to vote.

“That is more than 10 points higher than the general population and it’s almost 30 points higher than the voter registration figures for Muslim Americans,” he said.

Those numbers “should yield political progress” for the Iranian-American community, he said, urging them to be more active in U.S. politics. “Your contribution is needed,” he told the conference attendees.

Moran was asked about how the United States can support the efforts of democratic reformers in Iran without enabling Iranian authorities to discount or repress them by portraying them as the pawns of foreign countries.

The congressman said previous U.S. attempts to provide funding to promote democracy or civil society groups in Iran have backfired, with the money being seen as tainted, or by getting the recipients into trouble.

The most powerful weapon in the U.S. arsenal to promote democracy in Iran is the export of its ideals, which speak to universal values and basic human aspirations, Moran said.

He said statistics provided by the U.S. Library of Congress, which has digitized many of its materials on its website, show that Persian-language speakers are its second largest community of online users.

Moran said the library and other sources are disseminating the ideas that formed the foundation of the U.S. democratic system and have encouraged its continued support for universal rights.

“There are certain ideas that can’t be suppressed or eliminated,” he said.

“People want some spiritual nourishment. Nothing you can do can take that out of a human being. People want the truth. It’s just a universal need. People want justice. People want the ability to speak freely,” Moran said.

Statement on Anniversary of the Murder of Anna Politkovskaya

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STATEMENT BY VICTORIA NULAND,
SPOKESPERSON

Five-Year Anniversary of the Murder of Anna Politkovskaya

October 7 marks the fifth-year anniversary of the murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya. Her reporting on the war in the North Caucasus brought to light the violation of human rights and the suffering of the victims in this conflict. We honor Anna’s legacy as a courageous journalist.

While we welcome the recent arrest of suspects in her murder, justice will not be done until all those involved in the crime are identified and prosecuted.

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